

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 007896

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2016

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [SR](#) [SY](#) [UP](#) [YI](#) [FR](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH ON NOVEMBER 21 GAERC - ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN, SYRIA

REF: STATE 208899

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Poloff delivered reftel points on November 16 to MFA CFSP deputy Pascal LeDeunff and European Affairs DAS-equivalent for EU External Relations Caroline Ferrari, and discussed them with LeDeunff November 18. Embassy Middle East watcher discussed points on November 16 with MFA DAS-equivalent for Egypt/Levant Herv Besancenot and Middle East Presidential Advisor Dominique Boche.

#### Middle East Peace Process

12. (C) Besancenot welcomed conclusion of the November 15 "Agreement on Movement and Access" and commended the recognition of the key EU role, as conveyed in reftel talking points. At the same time, Besancenot observed that our talking points had stressed the need for momentum on the economic and security tracks, without mentioning the political track. He repeated familiar GoF arguments on the need to energize the political track, and not hold it hostage to the security track in particular. In this vein, the GoF did not agree with the perceived Israeli insistence that Palestinians fulfill 100 percent of their demands on security before progress on the political track was possible. In the GoF view, progress on security would not be possible unless PA President Abbas could demonstrate a political opening and show his people tangible results from Gaza withdrawal. Poloff questioned Besancenot's interpretation of the Israeli position, noting PM Sharon's earlier remarks that he was looking for 100 percent effort, not necessarily 100 percent results, from the Palestinians. Besancenot agreed that progress on security and the economy was important but reiterated that the political track could not be put on hold indefinitely; for this reason, the GoF remained worried about the continued absence of contact between PM Sharon and Abbas. In the GoF view, the roadmap should not simply be a distant "icon," to which we refer in abstraction, but it should be reactivated and become a living document.

13. (C) LeDeunff of CFSP, meanwhile, added that France would push for a GAERC conclusion on East Jerusalem. Events there, he said, are very worrying. "The Israelis are doing things they shouldn't be doing." The French believe that these measures (he cited building of the security barrier and demolition of houses) threaten the peace process itself and are "contrary to the spirit" of the road map. He stated that although the conclusion would be mostly optimistic, it would also note the EU's concern on this front.

#### Syria

14. (C) Besancenot generally agreed with our Syria points, but sought to emphasize a few nuances. While the GoF agreed with us that Mehlis had the authority to determine the location of interviews of Syrian officials, the GoF would advise Mehlis to be more flexible on insisting that interviews take place in Beirut. With the Arab League compromise proposals for interviews in Cairo, Cyprus or elsewhere, the GoF didn't see the location of the interviews as a critical matter; the most important objective was for Mehlis to be able to interview the SARG officials, show SARG non-cooperation, and report that to the Security Council before sanctions could be implemented. Besancenot commented that Mehlis' insistence on Beirut interviews was causing concern among key Arab governments, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as well as UNSC members like Russia and Algeria, making them more sympathetic to the Syrian arguments. On Bashar's November 10 speech, Besancenot agreed it was bad, but said we should not overestimate its importance, or respond to one provocation with another. Besancenot dismissed the speech as aimed at shoring up Bashar's support within Syria, and said that Lebanese PM Siniora had counseled against overreacting as well. In a separate conversation with Poloff, Presidential Middle East Advisor Dominique Boche reiterated that the GoF's overriding objective was that UNIIIC Chief Mehlis be able to interview the Syrian suspects; therefore, Mehlis should accept a compromise on interviewing SARG officials in Cairo, Cyprus, Geneva or elsewhere and not

insist that interviews take place in Beirut, which was counterproductive and would put the GOL in a difficult position. At the same time, Boche conceded that Mehlis should not be drawn into negotiating an MOU with the SARG on the location/modalities of the interviews.

15. (C) On Syrian FM Shara's presence at the Barcelona Summit, Besancenot said that the GoF would not show any warmth towards Shara, but it remained very annoyed with the UK initiative to invite Iraqi FM Zebari to attend the summit as an observer. Besancenot concluded that the UK approach suggested an attempt to cut Syria out of the Euro-Med while bringing Iraq in, which would only feed Syrian arguments that it is being unfairly targeted. Poloff advised Besancenot to avoid linking an Iraqi observer presence at the Barcelona summit, which is an internal EU matter, and the need to keep Syria isolated at the gathering, which is consistent with achieving our shared objectives on UNSCR 1559, 1595 and 1636. Presidential Advisor Boche confirmed separately that the GoF would not have any bilaterals with Shara at Barcelona.

Iran  
----

16. (C) On Iran, LeDeunff said the ministers would discuss the upcoming Nov. 24 BOG meeting. LeDeunff said the EU would emphasize two elements: it is worried about the Iranian authorization to recommence conversion at Esfahan, but it continues to believe that negotiations are the way to resolve the situation.

Iraq  
----

17. (C) On Iraq, LeDeunff said there would be no conclusions issued, just a general discussion. He mentioned France's support for the Arab League's efforts to organize a conference at the beginning of 2006.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

Stapleton